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SUBJECT: BIOGRAPHIC REPORTING: FRANCISCO BARRIO TERRAZAS - MEXICO'S
NEW AMBASSADOR TO CANADA

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Controversy Greet's Mexico's New Ambassador to Canada

1. On February 26, 2009, Francisco Barrio Terrazas presented his credentials in Ottawa as Mexico's new Ambassador to Canada. Barrio's appointment has resulted in protests and calls for his resignation from Mexican and Canadian women's groups and human rights organizations. The groups assert that while Governor of Chihuahua from 1992 to 1998, Barrio was negligent in pursuing the killers of an estimated 500 women and so responsible for allowing the wave of gender-based violence to grow. However, Barrio also has a strong record of promoting economic and social development, and he can be expected to seek greater Canadian involvement in Mexico's manufacturing sector.

2. The following is a biographical report on Mexico's new Ambassador to Canada.

PAN No Longer the "Loyal Opposition;" Barrio's Early Political Career

3. Francisco Barrio Terrazas was born on November 25, 1950 in the southern Chihuahua town of Satevo. He received a bachelor's degree in accounting and an MBA from the Autonomous University of Chihuahua. After working as a consultant in the private sector, Barrio entered politics in the early 1980s. Like many businesspeople from northern Mexico, Barrio was responding to what he considered to be the declining legitimacy of the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI). In this view, the populist policies of Presidents Echeverria and Lopez Portillo represented the end of a long-standing, informal coalition between the PRI and PAN-leaning business owners. The business community also attributed the balance of payments crises of 1976 and 1982 to these populist policies. The tipping point occurred when Lopez Portillo nationalized the banking system in 1982. As a result of this action, Mexican government institutions could no longer be trusted to protect property rights. At this point, many businesspeople, such as Barrio, left the private sector and used their financial and political capital to embark on political careers. Barrio became the first PAN Mayor of Ciudad Juarez in 1983.

4. Barrio gained national and international attention in 1986 when he ran for Governor of Chihuahua and lost to the PRI candidate, Fernando Baeza Melendez. Members of the PAN and international press alleged that the PRI committed electoral fraud in denying Barrio the governorship, thus further eroding the party's legitimacy. The alleged fraud fueled public support for a nascent PAN opposition group known as the "Neo-Panistas" or "Barbaros del Norte," which played an important role in Mexico's democratic alternation of power. In addition to Barrio, several prominent political figures emerged from this movement, including Vicente Fox and 1988 PAN presidential candidate, Manuel Clouthier.

Governor of Chihuahua

5. In 1992, Barrio ran again for Governor of Chihuahua and won, becoming one of three PAN Governors that the business-friendly President Salinas allegedly allowed to reach power. As the first PAN Governor in Chihuahua's history, Barrio entered office

facing high expectations, and his results were mixed. He presided over a period during which Chihuahua's manufacturing industry became one of the leading sources of foreign exchange for Mexico. Moreover, Barrio and state business leaders founded the Fundacion del Empresariado Chihuahuense (FECHAC), which is still one of Mexico's most effective civic organizations for delivering development assistance (see reftel). At the same time, human rights organizations criticized Barrio, both domestically and abroad, for his inability to arrest and prosecute those responsible for the Juarez femicides. The human rights groups accused Barrio of indifference and insensitivity. They allege that Barrio said that the victims brought the crimes upon themselves by "walking in dark places and dressing provocatively," an allegation that Barrio denies.

President Fox's Corruption Czar

¶16. When President Fox took office on December 1, 2000, he appointed Barrio to be the architect of his flagship anti-corruption campaign. As Secretary of the Comptroller, Barrio promised to punish the "big fish" of previous PRI administrations. During his three years in office, however, there was a broad public perception that Barrio failed to prosecute high profile corruption cases. Most notably, he was unable to prosecute PEMEX union leader Carlos Romero Deschamps for reportedly providing union funds to finance campaign spots for the 2000 presidential campaign of Francisco Labastida (PRI).

¶17. In 2003, Barrio left the Secretariat of the Comptroller and won a seat in Mexico's lower house of Congress on the PAN's plurinominal list. Barrio then served as the legislative coordinator for the PAN in the House of Deputies. Political observers at the time interpreted this series of events as a sign that Barrio had fallen out of President Fox's inner circle, and had lost clout within the PAN. In 2005, Barrio announced his interest in his party's nomination for the 2006 presidential election, only to pull out shortly thereafter, citing funding shortages after he failed to win President Fox's endorsement. Barrio completed his term in Congress in 2006 and returned to the private sector, where he remained until his appointment as Mexico's Ambassador to Canada.

¶18. Comment. Barrio's political career has been characterized by his groundbreaking role in Mexico's democratic transition. He is considered by many to be a shrewd politician who helped lead PAN's transition to a viable opposition and then governing party. Despite these accomplishments, his ambitious policy pronouncements and high public expectations for his ability to effect change often collided with the realities of Mexican politics. After falling out of Fox's inner-circle, Barrio's ambassadorial appointment is widely viewed as a consolation prize for his years of service. The appointment also signals that his career in elected office has likely peaked. With this in mind, Barrio will likely try to parlay his trade and investment promotion efforts in Canada to benefit his future aspirations in the private sector.

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